

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 653

By Southerland

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate the staff, leadership, and clientele of Evergreen Presbyterian Ministries on the occasion of that institution's fiftieth anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly pause to salute those venerable institutions and organizations that have worked assiduously to improve the lives of Tennesseans with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, one such organization is Evergreen Presbyterian Ministries; in 2009, the staff members, leadership, and clientele of Evergreen celebrate its fiftieth anniversary; and

WHEREAS, for half a century, Evergreen has been helping people with disabilities build better lives; from humble beginnings in rural Louisiana, Evergreen Presbyterian Ministries has grown into one of the premier non-profit providers of community-based services and support to nearly one thousand individuals and their families in six states; and

WHEREAS, when the ministry first opened the doors of its Evergreen Presbyterian Vocational School in a former public school building in Evergreen, Louisiana, the predominant model for providing training to and ultimately assimilating the developmentally disabled was an institution-based one; and

WHEREAS, with generous financial support from the Barton Foundation and the Women of the Presbyterian Church, and under the presidency of Reverend Ralyn Parkhill, the vocational school grew considerably in its first few years; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, Gordon A. Hanson became President, and Evergreen opened a new facility in Shreveport; Evergreen House was a large half-way group home that served individuals who had achieved the level of vocational competency and adaptive behavior necessary to function in such a setting; and

WHEREAS, four years after opening Evergreen House, the ministry expanded its mission to include clients with severe disabilities; its Evergreen Manor facility, situated on the campus of the vocational school, offered ninety-six beds for those who needed intermediate care; and

WHEREAS, Evergreen Presbyterian Ministries began to transition from the institution-based model to the current community-based model of vocational training and assimilation for the developmentally disabled in 1980; by 1994, Evergreen had closed its last remaining institutional program, based at the ministry's original campus in Evergreen; and

WHEREAS, much of Evergreen's phenomenal growth was guided by its third President, Dr. Bernard R. Wagner, and a generous bequest made by the late Winston Brown provided the financial wherewithal for much of the expansion; and

WHEREAS, today, the Haughton, Louisiana-based organization provides compassionate and innovative care to the developmentally disabled, just as it did five decades ago, but thanks to the generous support of many donors and the discipline of its leadership, Evergreen Presbyterian Ministries has grown much larger, allowing it to offer more services to more clients; and

WHEREAS, the ministry's highly capable General Administration includes President John Taylor, Vice-President of Finance Kent Craft, Vice-President of Human Resources Beth Ann Arnold, and Vice-President of Development Jill Burda; and

WHEREAS, Evergreen's locations in this State offer a wide range of support services to Tennessee's developmentally disabled, allowing those citizens to enjoy a level of happiness and productivity they might otherwise have never known; and

WHEREAS, for all that Evergreen Presbyterian Ministries has done to improve the lives of countless Tennesseans, this institution should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate the staff, leadership, clients, and families of Evergreen Presbyterian Ministries on the occasion of that organization's fiftieth

anniversary and wish them all the best in the future as they continue to work together to forge happier, more productive lives for innumerable Tennesseans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.